

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clondra** Ref: **876**
County: **Longford** Mark: **295**
Category: **B** Date(s): **28/06/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	43	44
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	39	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	29	30
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	17	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	58	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	28	29
TOTAL MARK	450	282	295

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Cluain Dá Rath! Welcome Clondra to the Super Valu 2015 National Tidy Towns competition. You have a nucleus of 10 to 8 people from the general pool of 16 to 20 people who take part in your work each week. We are glad to hear that the schoolchildren form part of this group. You try to meet bimonthly in the summer and less regularly in the winter. This is sensible. You list many groups who help you with your work. You obviously have a very good relationship with Waterways Ireland going back many years. We found your submission to be very well put together. Your communication is both traditional and modern, and therefore you get your message across to all age groups within the community. We do not appear to have received a Tidy Towns plan from you, although last year's adjudicator referred to your village enhancement plan. At the end of your Entry Form you say that you are still working from your 2011/2012 village and area development plan. It is probably time to fully review this document/plan. We would encourage you to submit a Tidy Towns plan - a three or five-year plan will focus your mind on what you can hope to achieve - no matter how simple a plan it is. You should choose the category headings within the competition as your focus in such a plan. It need not be prepared professionally but you should consult locally in preparing such a plan. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to Clondra in drawing up your work programme. Please refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a plan. It is essential to progress in the competition and to gain extra marks under this particular category that you submit such a plan in 2016. Your map is indeed rough as you describe it, but adequate to deal with your entry. Well done on paying good attention to the guidelines to completing the Entry Form. You have numbered the projects sequentially throughout the entry form as requested, and followed this through with matching numbers on the map. We are delighted that you meet with the school children - local Girl Guides and also with the teachers and pupils of the local school. The art classes are also a great idea. We are not surprised that you have lost track of the number of years that you are entering - as it is now between 35 and 40. You are loyal participants, and this adjudicator was very happy to revisit your lovely village, not having been there since 2007. We are delighted that you work so well together as a community. Well done on your occasional use of Irish in your actual written submission!

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

Since we were last in your village we noticed the upgrading of the properties along the harbour. The only little disappointment we have is that timber sash windows have been replaced with uPVC inserts. Nonetheless we admired the general upgrading and the bright yellow and red doors. Well done to the relevant owners, and we sincerely hope that you have a new occupant for the 'derelict' building in the near future. Perhaps even if the galvanised roof could be painted this would help. Not alone is tourist accommodation difficult to find in Clondra (although we were lucky!), but it is indeed difficult to find in County Longford in general. This must surely present an opportunity to potential owners of this lovely canal side property. Perhaps talking to the local authority's Architectural

Conservation Officer might give you some ideas as to how to progress the completion of the terrace upgrade.

We understand both points of view in relation to the possible new graveyard. We thought about it a lot on our visit and since. One potential solution which we came up with - but may not be acceptable to the Heritage Officer nor to yourselves was the possibility of forming a banked 'tearmann' boundary within the field beside the church. A tearmann was the irregular boundary around old monastic settlements in early Christian Ireland. It was usually comprised of stone banking. Like the ancient graveyard boundaries such a new boundary would be irregular. Moreover, unlike the ancient graveyard boundaries - you could possibly build this to such a height as to hide the new graves layout from the public road, and perhaps plant the new banked area with native species such as hawthorn. It is really not our business to make suggestions such as this - but in the absence of an agreement to move forward - we thought we would try! We are sure that the local authority has your best interests at heart in relation to the character of your village, but as a community you have your own wishes and desires also. We hope you reach a compromise! With regard to the parking at the church - we have to defer to the local authority and the Gardai for a solution to this. The only other solution would be to get the diocese to provide more late Sunday evening masses!

We were a little disappointed at the condition of the Dry Dock on this visit. It needs cleaning out as it is sludgy and somewhat weedy. A small old carpet/mat was thrown over the railings at the Dry Dock. Re the auctioneering sign remains at the Mill - we fully understand your problem with this, but there is little you can do about it and in all truth - it is not too bad.

The Richmond Inn was well presented and well done to the owners on their use of Irish in their shop front sign. The Camlin bar building also looked well on adjudication day, although the beer barrels placed intermittently along the frontage detracted - and more so - the untidy nature of the area to the side of the single story extension to the building looked poorly. Can this be tidied or screened? An old post box was in a ruinous state adjacent to the Camlin Bar - despite its lovely setting in a stone wall with rose bush surrounds. The lock keepers house was well presented with a neat garden. It is a pity that one uPVC window has replaced the timber sash window in the original house. Your bridges (including the lock gate bridge) are an important part of your built heritage.

The parish church is generally well presented, but a downpipe near the doorway needs repainting, and the half barrels at the doorway are beginning to look a little old and worn. We admired the original name stone of 1853. We would urge you to investigate the possibility of conservation grant funding to ensure that the lovely timber windows in your church are conserved. Talk to your County Architectural Conservation Officer. The gate leading into the churchyard is rusting and requires attention. The amazing stone exhibits in the church grounds are a real surprise for the visitor, including the skull and cross bones stone flag on the ground. The Medieval church remains beside the current church are very well presented - apart from the worn tilted signs on the gates leading into the old church. Inside the ruined church was meticulously maintained, and was a place of great peace and stillness. There are also some traditional gates in the village and its immediate area. We encourage you to value these. The Lock house on the Tarmonbarry road at the entrance to the Clondra Lock looked really well with its red doors and beautiful traditional timber sash windows.

It is good to see the use of Irish - for instance in the Waterways Ireland signs.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Well done to Pauric and his two FÁS helpers whom your name as being the men in charge of the Longford approach roundabout. It is good to see that families living near a particular green space take responsibility for it - and so well done also to the three families near the Tarmonbarry approach green space. We are in wholehearted agreement with the official from Waterways Ireland in relation to leaving the island in its present natural state. If the official agrees to the wildflower seed being sown on the island please be sure to source this seed from a reliable source who only supplies Irish wildflower seed.

The flower containers at the harbour were delightful with their lovely yellow flowers. We note they are watered regularly by three of your members (as well as the other containers in the village). We admired the oxeye daisies growing on the bridge very much. The blue picnic tables spread out along the hard landscaped harbour side looked extremely well. Clean bunting fluttered in the breeze. Clean flags flew on the other side of the canal. The hard landscaping and seating along the canal banks encouraged visitors to dally - including anglers. The planted bicycle along the harbour side was pretty. In fact the scene is pretty idyllic and this adjudicator found it hard to leave!

The water and walking trails the new Blue Way Trail are now 'up and running' and extend further of course than Longford. On our visit we met a gentleman who had walked the entire canal from Dublin to Clondra over a number of days. We are - as usual - utterly impressed by the work of Waterways Ireland here in Clondra and throughout our travels annually. Of course they too depend on good local communities like yourselves and on the cooperation of the local authority. Their new developments and maintenance of the existing developments - such as the toilet block and information boards - is exemplary.

The semi-mature trees which you have planted across from the harbour buildings - on the other side of the canal - since this adjudicator's last visit are a nice addition to the landscaping. We noticed the commemorative individual commemorative planting for the girl guides. The new Marina area was also being used on adjudication day for angling purposes. It is good to see this area accessible to all. The shrub planting beside the ramp looked well. The new signage for the new Blue Way is well placed in the landscaped areas, and is informative and interesting.

The sheltered wooded walkway to the Clondra Lock off the Tarmonbarry road is delightful. Full marks again to Waterways Ireland for the maintenance and landscaping of this area. We loved the way the Clondra Lock sign was surrounded by a large bush area. The harbour side stonework and general fresh paintwork looked extraordinarily well in this location also. The red paint together with the yellow marking lining - set against the green grass was bright and cheerful. Even though some work was ongoing and a temporary office was in place - this area was a pleasure to visit also.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:

You are correct in saying that the island is an excellent natural habitat. Perhaps you could talk to your County Heritage Officer in relation to a possible wildlife survey of the island in agreement with the waterways bodies, and this survey could lead to some information boards on the "mainland." Well done to the person who filled in the entry form for attending a biodiversity course recently. We are delighted to hear about the bug hotels, the hedgehog house, and the six nest boxes. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is a useful resource. The day in the bog as part of the Clondra Canal Festival is a wonderful idea. So interesting for visitors to travel to the bog by traditional means and to use the sléan on arrival. The canal trail from your village to Longford town is now open. Once again there are opportunities here for studying, collating, and presenting information about the wonderful habitats along this route. We would have loved to travel the Loop by water - perhaps on our next visit - as 'tourists'!

Although you have well trimmed canal banks you also have left large canal side areas in their naturally wild state to encourage the wildlife that use the canal as their habitat, and also the flora which thrives along the canal. Perhaps the schoolchildren would be interested in some wildlife surveying?

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

Your marks are already high in this category - so you must have been doing a lot of good work to date. You mention the fact that you had a series of courses in the area of sustainable living during last autumn. It would have been interesting to hear more detail about the subject matter on each section of the course. Well done to the HSE who sponsored a course about unhealthy shopping and cooking - with a view towards avoiding waste. Have you considered joining the 'Food Waste Challenge' or the Greener Homes programme? You could for instance get some of the community to survey how much food they waste in a week! We see that you are aware of the website www.foodwaste.ie because you have sent us some of their flyers. The 'make and do' mend course is also another good project which prevents waste. The 'gardening for healthy living' was delivered by a local lady who also has a special garden on the Tarmonbarry road. Her shared expertise includes permaculture, water conservation and mulching of grass. Well done to the students with their vegetable garden, and to the Longford Environmental Alliance further composting demonstration. We received your community composting flyer which we assume the local authority provided you with. You are correct in saying that the schoolchildren are very good ambassadors in spreading the word about the need to conserve the earth's resources. We are delighted to know that they achieved their second green flag recently. We see that you are aware of the need for energy conservation in relation to transport, but you are 'stymied' by the fact that there is no public transport system servicing your village. Perhaps you could investigate the possibility of a community bus? Your SEAI flyer fact sheet in relation to travel will be of benefit to the community, as will your water conservation sheet. The latter will be of all the more of interest to your community in the light of water charges. Well done on the energy-saving project of insulating the old school (Community Hall). We noticed the solar powered road sign for the school. We also noted your flyer in relation to water wastage. Have you made any inroads with your small business community in relation to their function with regard to the issue of sustainable waste and resource management? You are aware that sustainable waste and resource management is about more than recycling. Do continue to refer to the Tidy Towns publication's ideas in relation to Sustainable Waste and Resource Management - the updated version sent to you as updated handbook extract.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have a weekly litter pick which includes adults and children. Litter is segregated into bags provided by An Taisce as part of the spring clean event. It is true that the village is generally litter free, and your hope that that would be the case on adjudication day proved true. The only area where we saw any litter was around the lock gate where there were a few cans and bottles lying around the lock gate area near the Dry Dock. You are correct in saying that the fact that you are out regularly picking rubbish is a reminder to all residents of the need to control litter. Well done to the owners of the Richmond Inn on removing any cigarette butts near their premises. Weeds are removed on a regular basis. Dog waste appears to have increased as a problem since the walking trails were opened. It is unfortunate that the county council do not have the resources to launch a major campaign. What about providing scoop bags - but these must be kept in stock at whatever point that you make them available. Well done to yourselves on trying to convey the message from the health point of view.

During our visit there was a group of campers/Scouts/teenagers camping by the canal overnight. They obviously have good respect for your surroundings, and have the 'blessing' of Waterways Ireland to use all the facilities. There was no untidiness the following morning and everything was left as found. We were a little concerned with the age group of the people using the playground. It is stated to be suitable for children up to 12 years but on our visit it was predominantly teenagers who were using the equipment. This should be monitored. We noted that the wiring netting on the locks the crossing area was slightly torn in places. At the harbour area a cul-de-sac 'stop' sign was gone and the 'stop' sign on the road up to the main road was badly in need of paint. Would it be possible to store the five or six beer barrels away from the floral landscaped area near the bridge? A small sign for kayaking on the Killashee

approach was torn.

The area around the bring banks was extremely tidy. They are easily accessible but well 'camouflaged' with the lovely stone wall and greenery around. The normal signage would be intrusive because of its scale/ size, however we think it probably a good idea to provide an alternative smaller directional sign in relation to the use of the bring banks in particular for visitors.

On the road near and opposite the church - a large recessed area with stone walls had a rusty gate with a yellow sign / 4.3 acres. Can this recessed area be surfaced and the gate painted? There was a kayaking fly post on a pole near the Lock house on the Tarmonbarry road.

Residential Streets & Housing Areas / Sráideanna Cónaithe & Ceantair Tithíochta:

You are lucky that so many residents keep their properties to such a good standard. There is no need to worry about the storage of logs, as this did not prove to be a problem anywhere the adjudicator went on adjudication day. The Mill Development is a bit of a worry to you for many reasons. The estate behind the Mill does not appear to have any name sign. Grass verges near the entrance were in need of trimming. There was a very small amount of litter - more towards the inner end of the estate. The green fence to the end of the estate looked better than on our last visit. The unfinished estate did not look too bad. It looked generally clean, but we wondered if the entrance area could be surfaced? The gated estate near the church looked tidy.

Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes / Bóithre Isteach, Sráideanna & Lánaí:

It was obvious that grass verges are mown regularly. We agree that the yellow safety strips on the bridge remain in need of paint. Because this adjudicator came across this discussion with regard to painting the yellow/black stripes on such a stone bridge before - this adjudicator spoke to a County Architectural Conservation Officer (not yours) in the past for advice. Because of the sign's prior existence and safety reasons it is all right to repaint. There would also of course be a far more expensive but challenging and interesting possibility - of constructing an architecturally exciting pedestrian bridge nearby. We are sorry that you have to live with 'speed merchants'. This is a common problem for communities. The people who speed through your village do not know what they are missing! This adjudicator spent a few delightful hours rambling around your village on a sunny Sunday morning.

On the Tarmonbarry approach road the 'three dangerous bridges ahead' sign needs renewal. The public lighting along this road is all in scale with the surrounds. There are lovely views to the Shannon, but some field gates needs painting. We admired bog irises and dog roses in this area. The (cul-de-sac) area around the K pH speed limit sign could be trimmed and the sign could be painted. The 'road narrowing' sign beyond the church on the Tarmonbarry road was somewhat obscured by vegetation

On the Killashee approach from the bog land area the uprights of the 50 K pH might be painted. The road surface could be improved. We noticed the Green Flags at the school. The Killashee directional sign was slightly turned at the junction. There are lovely stone walls on this approach and this is a leafy approach to the village. The surface of the road at the final approach needs resurfacing. On this and other approach roads we recommend the painting of all field gates in a uniform colour if possible. There was one small black bollard slightly leaning on the footpath near the bridge - as one approaches the village from the mill. There was a 'headless' road traffic sign in this area also at the junction of the minor road (near the same bridge) and the road from Tarmonbarry into the village. Some road markings requiring re-painting such as the 'stop' sign on the road surface as one emerges from the toilet block side of the canal.

Concluding Remarks:

Thank you for the humour in your entry form which we truly enjoyed – especially in relation to your bad luck in not seeing primroses on the way to school and in relation to the Jeyes Fluid story! This humour in no way interfered with your entry form but rather brought the points you are making very much to life. You also mention Roy who is ill and who is missed from his careful tending of the watering in recent years, so we wish him a return to good health. We hope he has heard you describe him in writing as 'an exemplary neighbour'. On adjudication day we spoke to 2 young men/lock keepers at Richmond Harbour and Clondra Lough. They are a credit to Waterways Ireland and to the communities from which they come, as they were both personable and informative. This adjudicator was very much looking forward to revisiting Clondra, and was not disappointed. There is something special about your village - which is something we thought on our last visit 8 years ago about another village in Longford - which proved to be a correct 'hunch'. Not alone did we enjoy our visit, but we also enjoyed reading your entry form, and indeed enjoyed writing this report. We hope it is helpful. We wish you every success in the future, and we look forward to reading about your progress in the future. We wish you every success in the future Go n-éirí libh!